

Brussels, 18 July 2013

Electric vehicles and smart grids: First EU-US Interoperability Centre opens for business

The first of the twin centres designed to promote common standards in electric mobility and smart grids on both sides of the Atlantic was today inaugurated near Chicago. Converging standards and interoperability between smart grids and electric vehicles will allow for deeper penetration of renewable energies in the electricity systems, thus facilitating the way to a low-carbon economy. Technology harmonisation will drive product and service innovation in the two world's largest economies and could prove instrumental in establishing global standards for electric mobility.

In the light of the EU-US negotiations on a free trade agreement, aiming to lower tariffs and harmonise standards, the work of the Interoperability Centres will be particularly pertinent in the energy and transport sectors.

The launch of the Interoperability Centre for electric vehicles and smart grids is the fruit of 18 months of dedicated work following the Letter of Intent (LoI) for closer co-operation, signed by the JRC, the European Commission's in-house science service, and the US Department of Energy (DOE) in 2011. The Interoperability Centre inaugurated today is hosted at DOE's Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago. The second Centre will be opened in the EU, at the JRC sites in Petten, The Netherlands and Ispra, Italy, in 2014.

The interaction between smart grids – intelligent electricity systems – and electric vehicles will ensure economically efficient, sustainable power systems with low losses and high security of supply and safety. Smart grids, as upgraded electricity networks, will provide a two-way digital communication between supplier and consumer which will predict and respond to the actions of all users connected to the grid. Interoperability between smart grids and electric vehicles is therefore paramount to achieving better energy efficiency, improved air quality in cities and reduced dependence on fossil fuels in order to move towards a low-carbon economy.

Standardisation in this field will benefit the European energy landscape while converging transatlantic technical regulations could lead the way to global standards. The trade and investment agreement currently negotiated by the EU and the US known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), aims to remove tariffs and differences in technical regulations, standards and certifications which cost time and money to companies and consumers. In the context of the importance of this agreement for converging standards across the Atlantic, the work of the twin Interoperability Centres will play a scene-setting role for technology harmonisation in the two biggest world economies.

In an additional development relevant to EU-US co-operation in standardisation, the JRC and the US National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) yesterday agreed to boost their co-operation in standards and measurements to 10 different areas, among which energy and transport.



BACKGROUND

The work of the two Interoperability Centres focuses on interoperability between electric vehicles, smart grids and recharging systems, as well as inter-laboratory comparisons. They also provide testing facilities for electric vehicles, batteries and related supply equipment. Finally, they will promote closer ties between the EU and US vehicle industries on electric vehicle interoperability

Links:

JRC leaflet on electromobility:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/downloads/jrc_2011_electromobility_leaflet.pdf

JRC thematic report on Energy:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/downloads/jrc_science_for_energy_report.pdf

More information on the JRC's research on standards and measurements:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/downloads/jrc_science_for_standards_reports.pdf

Co-operation between the JRC and the US:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/downloads/jrc_country_leaflet_us_en.pdf

DOE's Argonne National Laboratory:

<http://www.anl.gov/>